

mind has advanced enormously. Did the law instead of bringing about a rapid and revengeful execution of a convicted homicide give psychopathologists the opportunity of scientifically studying their mental states both past and present, we should slowly gain insight into a vital social problem which could only aid us in future prophylactic measures within the purview of eugenics, education, and mental hygiene both individual and social. Dr. Vernon Briggs suggests that there should be a law 'to abolish the distinction between medical and legal insanity in chronic, if not in all cases, and at the same time prevent the deplorable conditions which now exists whereby the mentally defective and diseased are returned to our prisons again and again.'

Spencer, the first homicide considered and whose detailed history occupies half the volume, was without doubt insane and had shown abnormal symptoms from his earliest life. 'The whole legal machinery of the State had been put in motion to crush this defective and uphold the Majesty of the Law, and so it came about that Bertram G. Spencer, a defective from birth, with the mind of a child, was tried for his life and sentenced to death and was executed with a smile upon his lips.' The second case analysed is that of Czolgosz who assassinated President McKinley in 1901 and who evidently the author regards as having suffered from that form of mental disorder which psychiatrists term 'dementia praecox' though quite falsely he was simply labelled as an anarchist. The third homicide discussed is the Rev. Richeson who as a poisoner was executed in 1912 without trial by either judge or jury. From the details supplied it is patent that this criminal was abnormal but only of an hysterical nature, so that it seems doubtful if his criminal responsibility can altogether be called in question.

The hard work and enthusiasm the author evinces in these pages are worthy of great appreciation and those interested in these psychological and social problems will find much to stimulate their thought. Society must be protected, but so must be the mentally unstable individuals who are the product of that society. Progress will only come about through the recognition of this factor and there are already signs in England that interest and study are being turned in this direction. Standing by tradition involves economy of thought, but with the same revulsion of feeling as we regard the act of hanging a little child for petty theft which occurred eighty years ago, so, in a few generations will society regard capital punishment.

C. STANFORD READ.

Cox, Harold. *THE PROBLEM OF POPULATION.* London: J. Cape, 1922. Pp. 198. 6/-.

It is hardly possible to praise this little book of Mr. Cox's too highly. It is an endeavour to set forth in the plainest language, which shall be intelligible to the man in the street, the conclusions at which biologists, eugenists and economists have arrived. Mr. Cox points out that the population of these islands has increased, is still increasing and ought to be diminished; that we have far more people than can possibly be supported by the agricultural produce of our land, and that we live by exchanging our manufactured articles for food produced abroad, but that our market for these is bound to diminish as other nations take

up manufacturing, and as our labouring classes become more inefficient and demand higher wages.

He gives one or two telling examples of the economic misery and low grade of mental culture, produced by unchecked reproduction,—a village in India—and a valley in China—and shows that there is no escape from such a condition whilst the overproduction of children goes on. “Politicians who pour out unlimited rhetoric about a C3 population, never give a sign that they have even begun to understand that the only way of getting rid of a C3 population is to persuade C3 parents to refrain from producing C3 children.”

Mr. Cox’s remedy is the spread of the knowledge of the means of effecting birth-control: he believes that the majority of our working-class would adopt those means, and would cease to produce children whom they did not want and could not support. He is wise enough to recognise that the spread of this knowledge is not enough, and that there will still remain a class who will produce children careless of the fate which may attend them; “various forms of mental infirmity—are generally admitted to be heritable; persons suffering from them should not even have the chance of reproducing their kind.”

The most distinctive feature of the book is the bold way in which Mr. Cox enters the lists against the theological opponents of birth control.

The Roman Catholic Church has been the one which has thus far been most opposed to family limitation by any means. In Ireland the result of this teaching is peculiarly manifest: there early marriages, large families and poverty are the rule, but for 60 years Ireland has exported its surplus of young men to America: now that exportation has stopped and crowds of unwanted young men are overrunning the country and spreading ruin far and wide.

Mr. Cox speaks with scorn—only too well deserved—of the attempts of certain Anglican Ecclesiastics to set up a morality opposed to birth control. Since they have no infallible dogma to fall back on, they endeavour to buttress their position by flagrant misinterpretation of isolated texts of Scripture. Even if we accept the doctrine of verbal inspiration their position is untenable, for the texts as Mr. Cox shows are not applicable—but the whole attempt must appear ludicrous to any man of commonsense.

Mr. Cox deals with the militarist argument of the necessity of breeding men to take part in the next war, he shows that in such a contest, the less numerous nation will be hopelessly out-distanced from the start, since its rate of increase will be on a small total. Therefore it is vain for France to prepare for future contingencies by increasing its birth-rate—the best guarantee for future peace would be a “League of low birth-rate” amongst the nations of Europe. In fact if a nation increases in numbers, either economic conditions at home must deteriorate, and misery and poverty must result, or if the increase be relieved by emigration the emigrants must press on the territory of some other people—and war will result. Biologically speaking the emigration may be justified, but if the ideal to be aimed at is universal peace it must be avoided.

E. W. MACBRIDE.